

State Representative

Craig R. Fry

District 5



Dear Friends:

As we all prepare to batten down the hatches for winter, I'm preparing to head down to Indianapolis for the 2000 "short" legislative session. As with any new session, I have high expectations that the General Assembly will craft public policy which benefits the citizens of St. Joseph and Elkhart Counties.

While it is not our intention to re-open the two-year state budget, the possibility remains that we may fine-tune some of the appropriations outlined in that legislation. It is also my hope that the General Assembly addresses meaningful property tax reform, and I will not support any attempts to burden homeowners with property tax shifts from businesses. I will also continue my ongoing efforts to bring economic development and good-paying jobs to the hard-working citizens of House District 5.

I consider it a great honor to represent you in the Indiana House of Representatives. Please understand that your input is vital to keep me focused on the issues most important to you. Do not hesitate to contact me at any time.

I wish you and your family a safe and happy holiday season and a prosperous new millennium!

Sincerely,



How to contact

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Indiana legislators enact tax cuts totaling \$672 million

The 1999 biennial state budget provides \$672 million in savings for Indiana taxpayers. I have detailed some of the tax cuts below.

- **Homeowners:** Property taxes on a taxpayer's principal place of residence can be deducted up to \$2,500. The deduction is located on Schedule 1 of the IT-40.

- **Senior citizens:** The income tax deduction for most seniors was increased from \$1,000 to \$1,500. Each qualified taxpayer may take this deduction — meaning married couples may now deduct \$3,000 from their adjusted gross income. Many seniors also received an increase in the property tax deduction from \$1,000 to \$2,000.

- **Dependent children:** The income tax deduction was increased from \$1,000 to \$2,500 for dependent children under age 19 and full-time students under age 24. You may reduce your Indiana adjusted gross income for each qualifying dependent.

- **Renters:** The renters' income tax deduction was increased from \$1,500 to \$2,000. This deduction is located on Schedule 1 of the IT-40 or the back of the IT-40EZ.

- **Small businesses:** Businesses will no longer have to "add-back" property taxes deducted on their federal returns.

- **Inventory tax cuts:** The inventory tax was eliminated for 87 percent of Indiana farms and businesses, saving \$129.6 million.

- **Property tax cuts:** The county welfare funds and the county welfare administration funds were eliminated from local property taxes, saving \$67.6 million.



Rep. Fry reviews tax cuts with Rep. Mike Dvorak (D-South Bend).

CHOICE home health care received additional funding

Indiana provides **CHOICE** in-home services like health care, home cleaning, nutrition, and transportation to permit people who are elderly or disabled to remain in their home instead of being forced into a nursing home.

CHOICE services are provided free to persons with incomes under 150% of the federal poverty level and on a sliding scale for those up to 350% of poverty.

The **CHOICE** program is a cost-efficient program for the state. The average cost per month for services is about \$600, while the same cost to the state under Medicaid for intermediate nursing home care is over \$2,300.

In the two-year state budget passed in 1993, the **CHOICE** program received \$21.3 million per year. In the biennial state budget enacted by the legislature this year, \$42.6 million was appropriated for **CHOICE** services each year.

For additional information on **CHOICE** services in St. Joseph County, please contact Real Services at 233-8205.

Educating our children

Did you know that more than 20 percent of adults read at or below a fifth grade level – far below the level needed to earn a living wage? Forty-three percent of people with the lowest literacy skills live in poverty.

The Indiana General Assembly has attempted to help by appropriating \$3.9 million in funding for early intervention (K-3) reading programs. The General Assembly also provided \$6 million to replace old and worn school library books and materials.

If you know of people who would like to obtain a GED, need reading help for their child, need reading help for themselves, want to learn English as a Second Language, want to improve their employment options or who want to go from welfare to work, contact the Literacy Helpline at 1-800-267-9029. The helpline is part of the Indiana Literacy Foundation.

The Indiana Literacy Foundation sponsors statewide programs to encourage people to read. Reach Out and Read (ROAR) is a pediatric literacy initiative to help infants and children between the ages of 6 months and 5 years discover the joys of reading. Developed by pediatricians at Boston Medical Center, ROAR recruits volunteers to conduct reading circles at health facilities. Doctors “prescribe” reading to their young patients, each of whom receives a brand new book after each well care visit.

How are we doing?		
	Indiana	U.S.
High School Graduation Rate	87.9%	82%
College Attendance Rate	53.5%	41%
SAT Composite Score	981	1013

Financial assistance for college

Attending college is a key factor for later career success. Indiana's future depends on good students who attend and graduate from college. Students interested in attending college may be eligible for several sources of additional funding.

- *Twenty-First Century Scholars* helps Indiana families afford a college education for their children.
- For more information, call 1-800-992-2076.
- The *State of Indiana* also offers several scholarships including the *Indiana Higher Education Grant*, the *Hoosier Scholarship Award*, the *Minority Teacher Scholarship* and the *Nursing Scholarship*.

For more information on these scholarships, please contact the State Student Assistance Commission of Indiana at 1-317-232-2350.

- The *U.S. government* also assists students in finding funds for college. Grants (which do not have to be repaid) and loans (which do have to be repaid) are available for eligible students. The programs include: Stafford Loans, Pell Grants, PLUS Loans, the Work-Study Program and Perkins Loans. Students must complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Forms are available through high school guidance offices, college financial aid offices or by contacting the U.S. Department of Education at 1-800-4FED-AID.

Publications available

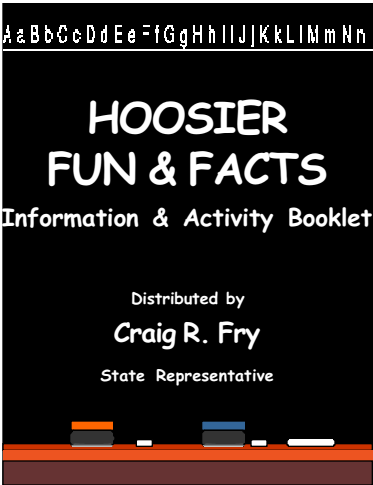
The following publications can be requested free of charge from my Statehouse office by calling toll-free 1-800-382-9842:

Relax . . . -- This informational booklet for senior citizens discusses a variety of issues, from taxes to health problems to leisure activities.

Higher Education -- A 24-page publication for those interested in pursuing a higher education degree, detailing many Indiana colleges and universities as well as occupational and vocational schools.

Guide to State Agencies -- This booklet details various agencies within Indiana state government, listing phone numbers, functions and general areas of responsibility for each of the state agencies.

Hoosier Fun and Facts -- Designed for elementary school-aged children, this information and activity book teaches students about their state through a combination of text, puzzles and other educational activities.



Attention Teachers

We the People . . . Project Citizen is a civic education program for middle school students. The Indiana House of Representatives will help to facilitate the state finals on May 5, 2000. For information on how to involve your students, please contact:

Thomas Vontz
Indiana University
2805 E. Tenth St.
Bloomington, IN 47408
812-855-0467 / 800-266-3815

State Phone Numbers

State Information	1-800-457-8283
Indiana House	1-800-382-9842
Indiana Senate.	1-800-382-9467
Governor's Office.	317-232-4567
Secretary of State	317-232-6531
Motor Vehicles.	317-233-6000
Natural Resources.	1-800-622-4931
Utility Regulatory.	1-800-851-4268
State Tourism	1-800-289-6646
Department of Correction.	1-800-680-5889
Department of Education	317-232-6611
Department of Health	317-233-1325
Family & Social Services	317-233-4454

Curbing school violence

Keeping our children safe is a top priority for the Indiana General Assembly. Indiana's Safe Haven Initiative provides additional funding to allow schools to stay open for extended hours for programs to reduce

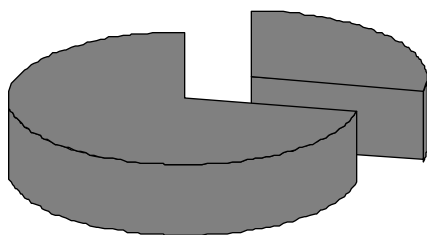
substance abuse, reduce violent behavior, and promote educational progress. Schools open before and after the regular school day provide a safe place for children who would otherwise be home alone.

Juvenile arrests for possession of weapons, aggravated assault, robbery and murder rose more than 50 percent from 1987 to 1996.

The Safe Haven program provides funding for emergency preparedness and school safety programs. The state budget also provided \$750,000 to train school safety specialists. It is important for school administrators and teachers to have proper training that allows them to identify and correct problems before serious trouble occurs.

One of the key components of the state safe school initiative is the coordination of safe school programs county-wide. The new state budget provides \$2000 to each school corporation to be used to participate in a county school safety commission.

While our schools cannot and should not become prison-like facilities, we must do whatever we can to protect our children from violence — especially when they are in the classrooms preparing for their future.



In 1997, 28 percent of adolescent boys reported carrying a gun, knife or club.

2000 Page Program

Serving as a page during the 2000 session allows any child age 13 or older the opportunity to gain a firsthand glimpse of how the legislative system works.

Students will be excused from school on the day they are serving as a page and will spend the entire day at the Statehouse.

Interested students should send me their name, parent or guardian's name, address, phone number, school and two different dates when the student could come to the Statehouse between January 10 and February 29, 2000.

Please remember session is short and places fill up fast, so apply as soon as possible.

Our mission is to create an environment for Indiana's youth that is conducive to both fun and learning, and which will stimulate student interest in government and community involvement. To that end, we plan to educate students regarding legislative processes; to give students an opportunity to meet their community leaders; to encourage student involvement in the community; and to introduce students to other students around the state.



Representative Craig R. Fry
200 W. Washington St.
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***Important information about
Session 2000 inside!***

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Representatives